

THE QUIVER

Saturday, July 23, 1870.



"Turning her back to him, she felt in his waistcoat-pocket for the watch."—p. 659.

TWO YEARS.

A TALE OF TO-DAY. BY THE AUTHOR OF "ESTHER WEST," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—IN STRAITS.

AS time wore on, and brought not only no success, but less and less hope of it, Harry Palmer was reduced to the severest of straits. He was sometimes hungry, and had not wherewithal to buy himself a meal, going about from morning till evening without tasting food. He could read a knowledge of his condition in the looks of his slatternly landlady, whose weekly bills he still scrupulously paid, parting

with every superfluous article of clothing for the purpose. He still kept his watch, however, though he could see that the landlady's eyes regarded with some suspicion the Albert chain to which it was attached. Most likely she thought it no longer depended thence, for one Monday morning, her bill being paid on Saturday night, she took means to ascertain, by asking what o'clock it was; though, unfortunately, Harry knew that the native clock in the kitchen kept time to a minute—the only thing in the house that could always be trusted to do so.

But while the respect of the landlady was daily on the decrease, sinking with her lodger's evidently sinking funds, Mary's polite attentions did not diminish. Harry got to like her bright face and gleaming eyes, full at once of humour and of cunning. He even took her into his confidence so far as to ask her to realise for him the value of his spare articles of clothing. He could not bring himself to enter the places where they dealt in such things.

Mary undertook the trust with her customary "Sure, sur. I'll make the most of 'em," she added, turning over the fine linen with a critical eye. And she did. She went from shop to shop, intent on the highest price which she could obtain, heedless of the scolding which awaited her on her return, and having secured it, she brought it faithfully to Harry and counted it out in triumph. He gave her a sixpence—not the first he had given her—which she proceeded to turn on the palm of her hand and kiss.

"What is that for, Mary?" he asked.

"Luck! sure."

"You get a good many sixpences from the lodgers, I suppose." He sometimes talked to the girl from sheer loneliness.

"Sometimes, if I'm lucky."

"And what do you do with them?"

"Give them to mother, sure!"

Harry wondered if it was true. He had heard her more than once asseverate the most startling fabrications. "I'm afraid you don't always tell the truth, Mary," he said.

She indulged in the broadest of grins, and nodded, as much as to say, "I know a great deal better than to do any such thing."

"Don't you know that it is wrong?" he asked.

"Father O'Shaughnessy says it's a sin," she answered, showing that she knew the meaning of the word *wrong*; but then she had been kicked and cuffed for all sorts of things, right and wrong, ever since she could remember, and to escape being kicked and cuffed was Mary's whole moral law.

"You're a Roman Catholic."

"Sure, sur."

"Then you know you must confess that terrible story I heard you tell your mistress this morning."

"But I never goes to confession now. I used to when I was a little girl. I went with mother every Friday."

"And why don't you go now?" he asked.

"I've got too much to confess," she replied, with her broad grin. Nevertheless, what Mary had said with regard to her mother was perfectly true. That very day she would seize the first opportunity to scud away at full speed, through the back slums, to the wretched cellar in which her mother, the much-abused wife of a drunken Irishman, lived with her three little ones, to deposit with her the welcome coin. And she could no more be hindered by threats, or even beatings, tried by various of her employers, from thus scudding home, than a wild bird can be prevented from flying with food to its nest while its wings are free.

Again, in spite of every effort to keep it, Harry's last dollar had disappeared. He still had his watch; but he had resolved not to part with that, and he clung to his resolve. He thought he would starve rather than part with it, and he was in a fair way of being put to the test. The chain, however, might go; and again his lodging-house bills were paid, and his landlady looked more suspicious than ever.

He certainly ought to have left the place, where he seemed to be so little wanted, instead of remaining till it was out of his power to go; but he had acted on the principle that "a rolling stone gathers no moss;" also, a dislike to give in had something to do with it.

At last, however, he was forced to give in. Starving was no such easy matter. He went out one morning to seek the berth of a common sailor, and work his passage to anywhere—what did it matter where, to him?

But privation was telling upon him, for before he had gone a hundred yards he felt so sick and giddy that he was obliged to return to his lodging. He had been feeling very tired for several days, and now he threw himself upon his bed with a feeling of utter weariness, mental and bodily, as if he no longer cared what became of him, if only he might be allowed to lie there and die in peace. And it seemed as if he would be left there long enough. The landlady, seeing that her lodger was perfectly satisfied with the attendance of her "help," no longer waited on him in person. No one had noticed his return to the house, and a little while before his usual time of making his appearance, Mary, released from more pressing duties, rushed up-stairs, and burst into the room in order to tidy it for him.

"Lor, sur!" was her exclamation, as she advanced towards the bed, with her broom and pail in either hand.

Harry raised his head. "I am very ill, Mary; but don't say anything about it, and don't let any one come up here."

"Never a sowl," replied Mary, resolutely.

"Thank you; that's a good girl," he murmured.

"Never a sowl but meself shall see to him,"

vowed Mary; and her fidelity might be depended upon.

Before she left him, however, she had persuaded him to rouse himself a little and go to bed, while she went down-stairs and prepared his tea.

Mary was in her element. She took up his tea, which he drank greedily, leaving the bread and butter, of which she had very little difficulty in disposing; and before retiring for the night she visited him again to see if he was comfortable. She found him complaining of heat and thirst, and for the first she threw the window open, while for the second she dived once more into the lower regions, Harry's water-jug in her hand, stole a lump of ice and put it in with the water, and set the cool and plentiful supply on a chair by his bed.

Next day she was constantly on the alert to run up-stairs to him, and hide all knowledge of his condition from her mistress. She took him his breakfast, and again he drank the tea and left the solid food untasted, nor could she, with all her coaxing, prevail upon him to eat.

She thought if she had something nice to take to him he would be sure to eat it, and she managed to steal a piece of meat belonging to another lodger—a theft for which an unfortunate cat nearly suffered the extreme penalty of the law. But even this would not tempt him; and now he could hardly raise his head to drink the water, for which he still craved and cried.

Wonderful were the straits to which Mary was put to support the tissue of fabrications which she wove concerning him. "He had gone out early," she said, on the third day, "before breakfast." This was because she found it useless to take him any more food. "He had got a situation." (She had heard his prospects discussed in the kitchen by her mistress and friends.) "She knew it was a grand one, and that he was going to have back all his fine things."

The landlady almost resolved to pay him a visit that very evening, and reinstate herself in his good graces.

But at length the self-constituted nurse was frightened out of her wits. She found her patient sitting up in bed and talking wildly. Discovery was at hand, for she could hear him outside the door, and even half-way down the stairs. But she did not think of discovery. Wild with fear, she bounded down-stairs, ran into the kitchen, and seized her mistress by the arm, crying, "Come along wid me, mistress dear! Sure he's awful bad!"

"Who's awful bad? What does the girl mean?" cried that personage, considerably ruffled.

"Come along wid me!" cried Mary, passionately; and not waiting for any further interrogation, she set off up-stairs again, her mistress following.

The landlady was in consternation, and turned fiercely upon her handmaiden.

"What did you tell me this very morning, you horrid—horrid girl?" she exclaimed, with righteous indignation.

Mary protested her innocence. She hoped she might never stir, and that all sorts of dreadful things might happen to her, if she had not seen him go down the street that morning, and her furtive eyes looked quite straightforward, with the earnestness of her asseveration.

The landlady shivered; perhaps Mary had seen her lodger's double or wraith, and he was going to die.

She sent Mary off for the doctor without delay, while she looked about her and calculated the chances of being repaid for her trouble, if she should be good enough to let him die there. Harry had laid himself down exhausted. Turning her back to him, she felt in his waistcoat-pocket for the watch. It was there still; that was something, and his box. But then there was the risk, and the chance of losing other lodgers.

She had not made up her mind when the doctor came. He made up his mind very quickly. The young man was too ill to be moved. The landlady remonstrated; she was a poor woman, and could not afford to nurse a fever patient in her house, with no chance of being paid for her trouble.

"It is too late now. Why did you not think of this before?"

"Because I knew nothing about it," she replied. "He was well enough yesterday."

"Nonsense," said the doctor. "He is in the crisis of the fever, and must have been ill for days."

The landlady knew better; for it never entered into her mind that Mary had been deceiving her so long.

"At any rate, he cannot be moved," repeated the medical man. "Has he nothing that you can repay yourself out of—no friends to whom you can apply? He looks and speaks like a gentleman."

The landlady showed the watch which she had impounded. It was safest to do so.

"His money is all spent," she said; "but he has this."

"You will be justified in selling it, to procure what is necessary for him," said the doctor; "or in pledging it, at least," he said.

So, under the circumstances, Harry was allowed to remain where he was, to live or die. Mary was allowed to wait upon him, and a poor old woman was installed as his nurse.

The presence of the nurse, however, made no difference to Mary; she waited upon Harry as assiduously as if there were no other lodgers in the house requiring her attention.

Harry got better quickly, with very little help indeed; but he got better to find himself without a dollar, or the means of raising one. His watch was gone, and the proceeds of it were represented by the

list-of extras which his landlady produced, and which she supplied till the fund was, according to her calculation, exhausted. Then she gave him notice to quit, and he went without a murmur. What was the use of murmuring? He took a lower lodging, which made him acquainted with strange bedfellows. There he sold all that he had; his former landlady would have done it for him, but his keys were missing all the time that he lay ill, and were only recovered when he was once more able to use them. The only relic of the past which he retained was Nelly's Prayer-book, its clasp still unopened as when she placed it in his box.

If it had not been the book he had been taught to reverence, he would have dropped it into the sea that it might not remind him of the giver. Only that would not have helped him to forget her. He almost rejoiced in his hardships, because they deadened the sharp gnawing of the wound her faithlessness had made.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

THREE during the early summer months Douglas Dalrymple had betaken himself to the far east of Hackney, to ask if there was yet any news of Harry Palmer. It was curious that he had never spoken of these visits to the Macnaughtens. He was not with them quite so much, however, for they were engaged with their father, who had at length carried out his intention of settling in England.

Mr. Dalrymple was evidently welcomed by the three ladies, who were always together; but there was a reserve about them which hindered any further intimacy.

After a longer interval than any, he came again, before leaving London for the season. It was the week after that on which Mr. Palmer, having made up his mind to recall his son, had found that recall was hopeless.

It was the usual hour for visiting, and the sun was hot. Nelly had gone to her room, and was lying down. Patricia was not at home—a rare enough occurrence; Anne was alone. It was curious how she and Mr. Dalrymple, meeting each other thus, fraternised in a moment. They seemed to understand each other without words—to feel that each said in greeting the other, "How glad I am to see you—to speak to you face to face, and without let or hindrance once more!"

"You have no news yet, I suppose?" said Mr. Dalrymple.

Anne shook her head.

"I promised to write, you know," she added.

"So you did; but I thought I would like to come and say good-bye, and give you my address, or rather series of addresses, for the autumn."

He made inquiries after the others, beginning with Mr. Palmer, ending with Nelly.

"We are getting very anxious about her," said Anne. "Even my father has been alarmed, and has called in a physician; she is not suffering from disease, but from sorrow."

"Can nothing be done?" asked her listener.

"If only Harry would come home!" she answered.

"Even my father would gladly bring him back."

"Would he?"

She gave an account of what had taken place a week ago.

"Now is the time, then!" Mr. Dalrymple exclaimed. "You ought not to let him cool. You must find your brother, if he is in the land of the living."

"How?"

"Send some one to seek him."

"We have no one to send?"

"Send me."

"You!" she exclaimed, in unfeigned surprise; for Mr. Dalrymple never spoke lightly. He evidently meant what he said. "That would be asking too much."

"You could not ask too much, to please me," he said. "Besides," he hastened to add, "what is an idle man fit for, unless it be to render service to others?"

"Public service," said Anne—"yes; but not such service as this."

"I have tried the public service, and it is rather hard. One often cannot tell whether one has done good or harm. Suppose I try this for a change." He went on, earnestly, "I know one—a lady—who has always said that private kindnesses are neglected in our day; and she devotes herself to her friends, helping them—for she has a large fortune—in quite a queenly way; not with small gifts, but with life-long benefits."

"How I envy her," said Anne; and "how I envy her" said Anne's tell-tale face.

"She is an invalid," he said softly.

"Still I envy her," said Anne.

"Well, will you send me?"

"I do not know what to say. You have other affairs?"

"They can go on very well without me."

"And it is in America that he is to be found, if at all."

"And of all things I should like to visit America. Indeed, I have often purposed to do so, and should be glad of an additional motive."

"You are very good. It is no use to thank you. I must fail to speak such thanks as you deserve."

"Wait till I come back successful."

"You do not know what a relief it is already to think that something is going to be done. I would rather go to the ends of the earth myself, than sit still here, doing nothing. And Nelly will revive, too. It will give her hope; it will give her life," she went on, eloquently.

"I am getting my reward," he said, stopping her, "before my work is done. And now I must be going; for I must write round to the friends who expect me, and tell them that I have been suddenly called upon to cross the Atlantic—that will be the way to put it."

"And you must deduct the pleasure they would all have had in your company from the sum total of the good to us," she said, with a shade of humour playing over the gravity of her face.

"The deduction will not be great," he said. "One's acquaintances care very little what one does with one's self. One man will do just as well as another to make up a party. At least," he continued, for he was not at all cynical, "they care very little in comparison with the closer friends one makes within the family circle. I am unfortunate in having no relations, with the exception of a married sister."

"And we have been almost wholly confined to the family circle—that is not well either. There must be better and nobler lives than ours to be worked out in the world. I think we family people are apt to grow selfish, our interests being all our own; and I know we grow dull and narrow."

"You have not grown dull and narrow," he said.

"I shall," she said. "I should already, if it had not been for my books. If the authors only knew what friends I make of them!"

"That which you might gain of breadth and brightness in the world," he went on, musingly,

"you might lose, perhaps, in purity and depth. I don't know: every one knows his own difficulties best. I hold that it is not good to live perpetually out of doors, as it were. Your acquaintances do not want you at your best and highest; they would probably think you a bore or a prig; and so you gradually lower your standard."

"But could you not have both the lives in one," she said—"the healthy outward activity, and the inward life of self-knowledge and self-possession?"

"It is difficult; but some do achieve it."

"You might."

"Yes, if I had a home, instead of a place," he answered, with a sigh.

His visit had been longer than was quite polite, and he rose to go.

"You can give me no clue to your brother's whereabouts, I suppose?" he said.

"None whatever," she replied; "but I can give you one or two photographs of him."

"They might possibly be of use," he said. "So good-bye. I shall make the most of my preparations, and then see you again before I go. You have furnished me with a mission. I am your knight-errant for the present. Good-bye."

He kept her hand while he was speaking, pressed it warmly, and was gone.

"How could I ever have disliked him?" she said to herself, standing where he left her, still feeling the pressure of his hand.

(To be continued.)

ANGELS.

ANGELS' eyes are in the sky—
Stars that watch in heaven;
Angel tongues are whispering nigh,
In the winds that round us sigh
At even.

In the visions of the night
Angel forms hang o'er us,
Changing darkness into light,
Bringing scenes of past delight
Before us.

Not in vain, oh! not in vain,
Draw those angels near us;
In their breath we hear the strain
Of our dead ones come again,
To cheer us.

And our hearts grow brave and strong,
For the work we're given,
When at morn the angel throng
Leave us with a parting song
For heaven!

SHORT PAPERS ON SHORT TEXTS.

BY THE REV. GORDON CALTHROP, M.A., VICAR OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S, Highbury.

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD."

BETHANY is a little simple country village upon the hills near Jerusalem. If we were to start from the city walls, and ascend Mount Olivet, we should reach the place in about half an hour's walk, travelling in the very same road which our Saviour trod so often when he was upon

earth. Many a time, after a hard day's work in the Temple, Jesus passed out of the gates, in that direction, in the cool of the evening. Perhaps there would be a few disciples with him, and he in the midst of them, very pale and weary, but anticipating the pleasure of a visit to his friends in Bethany. He was leaving behind him the strife of the wicked city, where he had been contending

for many hours with the enmity of his opponents, or with the ignorance of the multitude; and he was going to find, when he reached the top of the hill, a loving welcome and quiet conversation, and a short period of much-needed repose for body and mind.

The friends referred to lived in one of the houses in the village; the family consisting of two sisters and a brother. About the brother, whose name was Lazarus, we know very little—I mean as to his character and disposition. He was very probably the youngest of the three, and of a delicate constitution; but the two sisters are distinctly described to us by the New Testament writers. Martha, the elder, was a good managing woman; active and bustling; in reality, as well as in name, the head of the family. She attended to business. She looked after the household. She saw that everything was in its proper place. She kept the whole machinery of the family in working order; and was at times, I fear, burdened and oppressed by the cares and anxieties of her position. Mary, the other sister, was reserved and thoughtful. I do not believe that she would ever neglect her duties, but she liked nothing so much as to get a little quiet time to herself for reading and thinking; and what she exceedingly disliked was to be obliged to come forward and make herself noticeable in any way. The difference between the two sisters was great; and when Christ entered their house, perhaps on the very first occasion on which he entered it, this difference showed itself very remarkably; for Martha was “cumbered about much serving”—i.e., she ran up and down; she worried herself and others in her anxiety to show due hospitality to her illustrious guest; whilst Mary, having fulfilled her part in the preparations, “sat at Jesus’ feet and heard his word.”

On the occasion to which our text refers, Mary had done something which called down upon her a very severe and unkind remark, and Jesus had interposed to defend her. But perhaps it will be my best plan to describe the circumstances themselves, before proceeding to speak of anything else.

After the raising of Lazarus, the Lord Jesus thought fit to withdraw himself from the public gaze and to quit Jerusalem. He chose as the place of his retreat a town called Ephraim, situated in the country near to the wilderness; and there continued for a while in private with his disciples. Presently, however, knowing that the time was arrived for his offering up, he came forth from his retirement and appeared again at Bethany. His arrival seems to have been the signal for universal rejoicing. Doubtless the whole village had sympathised with the sorrow and afterwards with the joy of the two sisters about their brother Lazarus, and everybody was moved when the news

spread that Jesus had come amongst them again. A supper was made for him in the house of Simon the leper. Martha “served,”—that is, looked after the arrangements of the feast; and Lazarus, the dead man raised to life again, was one of those who sat at the table with Jesus. Whilst the supper was going on a singular incident occurred. Mary came suddenly forward, with a costly alabaster vessel full of precious ointment in her hand. It was a sort of bottle, or vase, with a long neck to it. Breaking the neck off, she poured the contents upon the head of the Saviour and upon his feet, and then wiped his feet with her hair; and “the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” As soon as she had done this, the disciples began to murmur against her on the ground of the waste of valuable property. At all events, that was their pretext for murmuring. The box, they said, might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and the money thus raised have been given to the poor. But while they were murmuring, Christ overheard them, and interposed. Speaking in an offended tone, he bid them let the woman alone. He commended her act. He said that she had done what she could; that she had taken the only way open to her, under the circumstances, of manifesting her affection and devotion to her Divine Master. And he promised that wherever the Gospel should be preached, throughout the whole world, this loving deed of Mary’s should be spoken of and held in everlasting remembrance.

These were the circumstances. Now let us examine them more closely. We shall have to notice the actions and words of Mary, the disciples, and Jesus.

I. If Mary possessed the quiet disposition we attribute to her, there was something singular about her making herself as conspicuous as she did on this occasion. It was very unlike Mary to come forward before a large number of people, and to attract their attention by an unusual act. Why, then, did she do so? Because her quiet, reserved, thoughtful, affectionate nature had been stirred to its very depths by love to her Divine Lord, and she found herself *compelled*, as it were, to express her feelings, whoever approved, or whoever disapproved. I have often thought that we might call Mary “the disciple who understood Christ.” She seems to have fathomed the Saviour’s meaning more quickly and more truly than most of the others; and when he spoke of his death she knew for what reason he was going to die; she knew that he was about to undergo for her sake all the suffering and misery and shame that awaited him, and her heart flowed out in a sudden burst of love towards Him who loved her, and was about to give himself for her. And then, we remember, it was not so long ago that Jesus had raised her

brother Lazarus from the grave. She had had no opportunity before of showing her deep gratitude for that act of mercy and lovingkindness. Now she is able to manifest her feelings. And they are so strong, so overwhelming, that she breaks through her usual reserve, and behaves in a way that astonishes those who know her. Probably she never thought of what people would say. There was but one person present to her mind, and that was her Divine Master. She had only one desire, and that was to do him honour. But when she saw the disciples frowning and muttering, and knew from the expression of their faces that they were displeased at what she had done, other thoughts came in, and she was abashed and pained by the indignation she had excited. It occurred to her—"Have I done wrong, then? Have I acted with an unwomanly and indelicate boldness? Perhaps I have; perhaps I ought to have left it to some one else more worthy than myself, to do that act of final homage to our Divine Master. These good men would hardly be displeased at me if I had not erred. I fear I have done amiss." Poor Mary! She was misunderstood by her sister before, she is misunderstood by the disciples now. But what a comfort to her, and what an encouragement, to be, in both instances, justified and supported by the authority of Christ!

II. We turn now to the disciples. From one of the evangelists we learn that Judas Iscariot was the prime mover of the discontent and dissatisfaction of the disciples. It is curious to notice what influence that man had over the rest of his colleagues. I think he must have been an exceedingly able man, as well as a consummate hypocrite; for the other apostles, although they were continually with him, never seem to have suspected his real character; and, in this case at least, were very ready to follow his lead. No doubt, however, he had now other feelings to work upon. He was thinking of the lost opportunity of filling his purse with petty pilferings. Not so, of course, with the disciples. But they were not altogether pleased, I fancy, with a devotedness, a self-sacrifice, a burst of enthusiastic love, which seemed to go so far beyond their own. We must remember, of course, that the disciples were only imperfect men after all; nor were they, at this time, what they became after the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Spirit. And if the reader remembers this, he will, perhaps, not think the supposition incorrect, that they were a little jealous, a little displeased at being cast into the shade by this act of Mary's. They found fault with her because she had put herself forward with an undue boldness. They found fault with her because she had wasted, as they said, a sum which had much better have been expended on the relief of the poor. But the secret

feeling in their hearts was this—though, perhaps, they were not distinctly conscious of it—that Mary, in her lavish act of self-sacrifice, had risen to a height of attachment and devotedness to Christ, which left them, or seemed to leave them, immeasurably behind.

III. And now let us examine the words of our Lord. He takes Mary's part, and in so doing, indirectly but plainly rebukes the disciples. "Let her alone," he says; "you misunderstand the woman. You misinterpret her motives. You disapprove, but I approve. I tell you her deed is a good deed. She is to be praised for it, not blamed. She hath wrought a good work on me." We learn from this that even excellent Christian people may make mistakes in judging of the conduct of others, and may be condemning what all the time the Lord Jesus Christ is approving. Afterwards he goes on to speak about their zeal for the poor; and I think his meaning is this: "Your zeal for the poor is very praiseworthy in itself, but now it is mistimed. The poor are always with you, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good. But the present time is your sole opportunity of paying me fitting respect and homage before my death. Mary has perceived this, and you have not; and though you have condemned her act as a strange and unwarrantable one, it was not only the right thing for her to do, but it was also the only thing she could have done, under the circumstances, to express her reverence and love for me. She hath done what she could. She is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burying, and she shall be rewarded by a perpetual mention of this incident where-soever the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached."

And what lessons may be gathered from the narrative which we have been considering? These, I think:—A lesson of caution in judging of others who adopt modes of serving Christ different from those to which we have been accustomed, or which we think proper. Mary, as we have seen, was shut up to one particular line of conduct. Under other circumstances she might have acted differently; but placed as she was, she must act as she did, or not act at all. It may be so with people whom we know. We may say that they are erratic, impulsive, irregular, whilst the Lord, who knows all things, may be saying, "They have done what they could." We gather, too, from the narrative, that Christ judges of our conduct by its reference to himself. He is the centre round which all revolves, the pivot on which all turns, the end to which everything tends: and unless an action *be done to Christ*, it is not recognised by God as having any value at all. And lastly, we learn the importance which Christ attaches to a devoted personal attachment to

himself. This is *the* thing above all other things, of which he most highly approves. He proposes himself as the grand object of our love; and when he has won us to his love his chief end is gained: and the love most acceptable to him is one like Mary's—a love which does not

stop to consider what this or that person will think or say—which does not stand calculating how much it shall give, or how much it shall withhold—but which presses eagerly forward to cast all the treasures of its heart, its life, its inner being, in lavish profusion before his sacred feet.

NELLY'S QUESTION.

PART II.

NOW it happened that the previous evening Mrs. Keep had unbent a little to an old confidential domestic, with whom she sometimes condescended to gossip; and when little Nelly was snug in her crib, and, as it was supposed, fast asleep, had uttered certain remarks about "mercenary men having their eye on Mabel," which had impressed and alarmed the child; and, as we have seen, led to her putting that strange and awkward question to her Cousin Frank in the morning, which had made him tear up his writing and beat a hasty retreat, without obtaining that interview with Mabel which it had been the purpose of his letter to solicit.

No one knew better than Frank the extent of Mrs. Keep's property, for in her many new purchases, exchanges of leasehold for freehold possessions, and so on, he had been often her adviser. Every one would have compassionated Mabel for being so entirely passed over in her late uncle's will, but that equally the said ubiquitous and intangible being—"everybody," believed that she was to be most certainly the heiress of the rigid and stately dame Theophila Keep. "The bulk," they said, rolling out the word substantially, "would go to her; there might be pickings and remnants," at least so poor, innocent little Nelly's friends thought, or they would not have taught her to be so very reverential to Aunt Toffy; but "the bulk," of course, would be Mabel's. Frank knew this, and so, being a young man of talent and spirit, very generous, and, it may be, a little proud, he had found that said "bulk" sadly in his way whenever he wanted to put his bows and his looks into words. If he only had money of his own, as he sometimes murmured, his motives would not be open to suspicion. Now, his education and his profession, his health, good looks, and good principles, were all his wealth, and he well knew that in worldly appraisement they would be classed under the term "nothing," when compared with the fortune Mabel might inherit.

During the past night he had remembered with great satisfaction that Mrs. Keep was certainly not yet much on the shady side of fifty. She was hale and strong, and so methodical in her simple mode of living, that she seemed to be scarcely over the mid-career of her life. Reassured by that recollec-

tion, he had determined to obtain an interview, and put the question on which his hopes—nay, it seemed to him his very life, if life were to be worth living, depended, when there came Nelly's strange question, "What is mercenary?" followed by her explanation.

Suspicion, the curse of wealth, was certainly in the mind of the aunt, most likely in that of the niece. No, he would not subject himself to it; come what might of pain and misery to his feelings, he would spare himself the horrible humiliation of such a misconstruction.

Leaving a message of farewell with a servant on plea of business, he left the house hurriedly; and the daily tasks, regulated with a monotony that took much from the pleasure of occupation, duly proceeded. So much to useful needlework, so much to reading aloud in a dreary old-fashioned history of England, which, as it never by any chance was amusing, Mrs. Keep considered must be instructive. Then a concession of an hour—not a minute more—for Mabel's practice at the piano, then a walk, then dinner. The time between dinner and tea being, after great entreaty, Mabel's own, in which she had drawing and books in her own room, and, as her aunt asserted, "filled up her time to her heart's content," adding, "more's the pity;" for, like a good many people, reader, whom you and I know, Mrs. Keep undervalued every pursuit that she could not herself practise.

While Mabel was thus employed in her own room, Dorcas, the aged servant before alluded to, came to say that Miss Nelly was either naughty or unhappy. She had been complaining, and the woman had put her earlier than usual to bed; but the child was crying so bitterly to be taken home, that Dorcas, unwilling to bring Mrs. Keep to scold the little thing, good-naturedly had come to ask Miss Mabel to try to pacify her.

Mabel had her own sources of trouble that evening. She was feeling the irksomeness of the unvarying rigour of her aunt's house, and her youth seemed to spread out before her, like an arid plain that she would have to cross wearily, so far every day, until she grew old, and stern, and suspicious like her aunt. But at the words of Dorcas she went instantly to the child, and her own eyes were not dry as she stooped over the little blurred face, and kissed the rosy, tremulous mouth, that quivered every now and then



(Drawn by W. RICE BUCKMAN.)

"Mabel, dear—why, it is the will."—p. 663.

with a sob. The child saw the tears, or the traces of them on Mabel's face, and it had the instant effect of diverting her attention from her own troubles and she panted out, "What's the matter, Mabel?—dear Mabel! have they come?"

"Have who come, my little foolish Nelly?"

"The mercenary men."

"The what?"

"The mercenary men Aunt Toffy said would come to you."

"Aunt said—to whom?" cried the panic-stricken Mabel, with a sick dread at her heart, and an angry flush on her cheek.

"Only to Dorcas. But I know what they are, and I'm frightened, dear. They're mean and greedy; Cousin Frank said so."

"I don't understand the child at all," said Mabel, impatiently; and then, drawing a chair to the bedside, began to question the little creature, and soon learned all that the reader knows of little Nelly's question and its effects.

However, the child was soothed, and the promise given to her that she should go home to-morrow was ratified by Mrs. Keep, who thought it high time, as Nelly was six years old, that she should leave off wasting her time.

So away went Nelly next day to her home at Transiton, and Mabel and her grim aunt were left alone, with a something raised up between them, that made life not merely uninteresting but bitter to the younger of the two.

Two months passed, in which the lengthening of the days seemed but the drawing out of an interminable weariness to Mabel. She did not complain, but if Mrs. Keep had looked at her half as attentively as she looked at her accounts, she would have seen a wasting away far more important than any other waste could be—a young heart's happiness, a young life's health. However, in counting gains people do not always notice losses. The hard woman prided herself that she worked and lived harder than any servant she had ever employed, until it happened that, having sat mending some old sheets during an entire summer's day, Mrs. Keep, all at once, found herself, on rising from her chair, too giddy to stand. She called Mabel, but it was in a thick, almost unintelligible way, and sternly rejecting as a folly—an extravagant folly—her niece's wish to send for the doctor, she had herself placed in bed, attended by old Dorcas only, and stammering out that she should be better after a night's rest, imperiously dismissed Mabel.

In the middle of the night, the wakeful and pensive Mabel heard Dorcas's well-known footstep on the stairs approaching her room. Never before had that familiar sound caused any particular emotion. Now each step, one or two rather stumbling, as if in haste, was heard with a heart-throb that kept Mabel's white lips from uttering the question. She

seemed to know that her aunt was ill, and her hands were on her dressing-gown by the time that her door opened, and the woman faltered out, "Come to her—pray come! I don't know what to make of her."

Rushing down-stairs without a moment's loss of time, the exertion at once restored all Mabel's faculties. She was by her aunt's bedside, only to have her worst fears confirmed. A severe paralytic seizure had rendered the sufferer completely unconscious. To rouse the gardener and send for the nearest medical man was Mabel's instant work. Indeed, old Dorcas was too bewildered to know what to do in this emergency. Her mistress had always been so free from all weakness of the body that, somehow, the aged domestic had thought she was cast in a different mould from other human beings, and proportionably invulnerable.

Perhaps the poor woman's attack was strong in proportion to her strength, for though consciousness partially returned, speech or motion of the limbs never did. During a fortnight's watching, hope—always feeble from the first—had quite gone from Mabel. Her aunt, if not lovable, had yet been, in her hard way, attached to Mabel; and the young girl, in that supreme hour, forgot all but the fact that her protectress was dying. It added a bitter pang that her aunt could not speak, nor hold a pen. She made distressing efforts to do both, and fired her eyes so continually on the wall immediately opposite the foot of her bed, that Mabel had touched it, and moved a picture from it, and spoke about it, hoping for some sign; and all in vain. Soon there settled down the sleep that knows no awakening in this world, and Mabel was left alone.

She would have sanctioned the doctor summoning Frank to see her aunt, but he was in Dublin, superintending the restoration of a public building there; and as, when his name was mentioned, Mrs. Keep gave no indication of any wish to see him, he was not sent for.

And so Mabel was alone in the world. But no one talked of her loneliness; they talked of her fortune. A girl with an ample independence, they argued, would not be lonely. Happily, Mabel was not lonely in the most painful sense. During her recent trials—trials none the less felt that they were not communicated—she had gone to sources of consolation that in the thoughtlessness of youth and the gaiety of human hope are not valued at their true worth. Now she knew, as she never had done before, the sustaining power of Christian faith; and while others were conjecturing her future for her, the orphan girl was saying, "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

Poor girl! A trial awaited her which, as she had not thought of, she never had feared. On the day that the mortal remains were consigned to the grave, an inquiry arose about "the will." Old Dorcas, who had given the keys to Mabel, was sent to fetch from

an escritoire—that which had belonged to her late master—the old tin box she had seen opened on the day of his funeral. There was no will.

Could it be possible that Mrs. Keep had neglected to make one? Had she been impressed with the idea that Mabel would inherit, and therefore had not troubled herself? The copy of Mr. Keep's will was scrutinised, to see if there was any remainder to his niece; but, as we have said, it had been made years before, and there was no mention of any name but his wife's.

If she had made no will—(and it was her boast that she had no blood relations, absolutely none)—her property would lapse to the Crown.

These were arousing tidings; and certainly Mabel began to look round upon the home with very different eyes, when it seemed likely that it would be hers no longer.

Of course, there was a search instituted, and diligent inquiries made; for no one is loyal enough in such cases to feel deeply interested in the claims of the Crown.

Frank had heard of the death of Mrs. Keep in due course, and had even gone so far as to write a letter of condolence to Mabel. But that wretched word "mercenary" seemed to sit upon his pen, and cramp his writing and his ideas. Never was there a more formal thing penned.

Mabel felt it to be so. "He despised the wretched suspicion," said Mabel, "and it has estranged him; he is not even my friend."

But the tidings soon spread, as evil tidings ever do, about the will. Then Frank availed himself of a fortnight's holiday, which he had postponed until it was now autumn, and in a storm, such as those who cross the Irish Channel frequently experience, came over to England.

Mrs. Blenco, little Nelly's mother, had brought her rather unwelcome self, and her always welcome child, to stay awhile with Mabel and "see what turned up." Consequently, when Mr. Frank "turned up," his way to Mabel was smoothed by the presence of his matronly as well as his childish cousin.

The former, before she apprised Mabel, who, as she said, was "moping according to custom in her room," took occasion to whisper, "If there's no will found, Frank, her position will be dreadfully altered."

"Why dreadfully?" he replied, in a tone of assumed banter that provoked Mrs. Blenco, who pointing to little Nelly said—

"She's as ignorant of the world as that child, or she would certainly have contrived to find out whether there was a will."

"Perhaps she feared being mercenary," said Frank.

"Mercenary—stuff and nonsense!" was the contemptuous reply. The child meanwhile looking up from a picture-book in her lap at the word mercenary, seemed to be recalling some far-off memory; but

failing to do so, bent down again over her book, Frank actually smiling now at the recollection which had so pained him only a few short months back.

That night—that very night—by the fireside of that same room in which he had torn up his letter, he found an opportunity of speaking to Mabel. He did not, certainly, have much time, for it was while little Nelly's mamma was putting her to bed that Frank, startled by the pale face which he had left so blooming, had begun by uttering words of ordinary sympathy, and before he was aware of it they broke into words of— Well, it's not needful to go into details. At all events, he proved to his own satisfaction (Mabel never needed any such proof), that whatever other faults he might have, he certainly was not mercenary.

But there came a hitch that checked the high-pressure of Frank's off-hand, whole-heart proposal. Mabel feared now that she, forsooth, was mercenary. And amid the dear delight to a lowly, sorrowful spirit of finding companionship, happiness, everything, as suddenly as sweetly, came the word "portionless." Frank, too, was a struggling professional man, to whom money would be so useful. All at once the value of the lost fortune rose to her mind more vividly than it had ever yet done.

Although Mrs. Blenco and the rest of her kind had now another nine days' wonder to interest them, in this engagement, Frank and Mabel were not going to justify the comparison of their ignorance of the world with little Nelly's, for they both knew they must wait awhile before they could venture to marry. Mabel felt strong in the purpose of getting her own living for a time. She was skilful with her pencil: she could surely teach drawing. Her story was known to some kind friends, who would obtain pupils for her. Meanwhile, until Christmas, Mabel was to remain in Mrs. Keep's old house, retaining Dorcas, who, poor soul, did little else but maunder about, hunting for ever in all old nooks and corners for the will.

Mabel had had that part of the wall of the room on which Mrs. Keep's dying eyes were so fixed, dismantled, paper and skirting-board removed; but there was no hiding-place or cranny there, or anywhere, that they could discover.

So, happier under her disappointment than she had ever been before, yet, for Frank's sake, still sensible of a great disappointment, Christmas-time came round. Mabel declined all invitations. The memory of her dead aunt hung sadly on her, that first festival after her death. The impending parting from the old house made her cling to its walls, and resolve to keep that day for the last time at its hearth. Little Nelly was to be her companion. Frank, too, having some friends near, whom he was compelled to meet or to offend, meant to steal an hour from them, and pass it with Mabel.

Old Dorcas, now become very deaf, was on this day

dressed in her best suit of mourning, and established to wait in the parlour; for Mabel determined that Frank should take tea with her on that last Christmas Day.

Glowing with his hasty run through the frosty air, Frank was in the old quiet room as the clock struck seven, and after a greeting too heartfelt to bear many words, the young man sat down before the fire by the side of little Nelly, while Mabel was busy making the tea. All of a sudden old Dorcas said, as if struck with a sudden thought, "There's the Christmas tea, Miss Mabel. You know—that—them that's gone never used but one sort, rare and choice, of a Christmas Day."

"Is there any left?" said Mabel, remembering among her aunt's peculiarities the reserving of this choice tea.

"Yes, sure. She give me the caddy last year, and told me to keep the key myself; but I don't know as there's enough for now. I mind as missus said, 'Tell me afore Christmas comes, Dorcas, that I may get in a supply.' Ah, poor dear!"

"Well, get what there is, Dorcas; or stay—you seem shaken, I'll go and get it," said Mabel.

"I keeps it among my things, for the caddy missus allays told me to keep careful, for her sake, among the things I vallied most. She bought it in London, when she went up there about master's will."

Dorcas that night seemed to say everything that she was not wanted to mention. Mabel, forcing a smile, hurried her off, and in due time she returned with a very strong, handsome teacaddy in her arms, which bringing to the table, she unlocked, and set it open before Mabel, who peering in, said, "I don't see any tea, Dorcas. Ah, my poor aunt knew she had

used it all when she told you to re— Whatever is this?"

Frank, and even little Nelly, sprang to their feet at the tone in which Mabel had uttered the last words. She was white to the lips for a moment, as she gazed at a paper she had brought out of the teacaddy. Then a flush spread over cheek and brow, she sunk down on the chair, held the paper to Frank, who caught it from her. "Oh! whatever is it, Frank?"

"Mabel, dear—why, it is the will."

"Wherever did you keep this?"

"In the corner cupboard in my room, with my chaney, as master gave me when I'd lived fourteen year with him," cried Dorcas, not exactly understanding.

Instantly Mabel remembered that cupboard was in the room behind the wall of her aunt's death-chamber, and her anxious gaze was now accounted for.

Yes, there it was, made by herself, an exact copy of the will that her husband had made in her favour, merely with the substitution of Mabel's name, and witnessed by two servants who had left in what is called, very significantly, "a tiff,"—and now lived in distant parts of the country.

And so Mabel was an heiress after all. She had the intense joy of knowing that her husband's love had in it no touch of that spirit which had so troubled little Nelly—mercenary. No, they were both free from that, as old Dorcas, and little Nelly, and some others found; for Mabel and her husband had learned that wealth is a blessing or a curse, as it is employed. Often in their prosperous, well-ordered home they have had many a happy laugh over Nelly's question.

THE OLD HALL AND ITS MEMORIES.

"Only men's deeds do live."



STRANGE, that such an old, old house, memento of days long dead, should be standing—the labour of men who, generations and generations before, have passed away, and in all save this their handiwork been forgotten.

All their hopes and fears, all their loves and joys, and all their sorrows, where were they now? what were they to us? Their very names would never more be known, save where their deeds had been such as to give them to story; and, ah! how many a time would it be better that their deeds should rest with the dead.

And gradually the influence of the place crept over us—we, two—who, casting fear aside, were so soon to begin with love and joy our lives together. With our hopes, this world had been to us a happy place of sweet flowers and rich sun-

shine; with our fears, it had been to us a desert of hard stones and cruel frosts; and with unconscious selfishness we had expected all around to feel with us.

But our lives had only been telling the same tale that is told from generation to generation, and which, alas! would be of matter to none save ourselves; for it would be rolled into the one great unwritten history of the world.

There is a peaceful quiet, a solemn, weird grandeur, about the old house—the old, old Hall which has stood a silent witness to the events of centuries. The massive door of the great entrance, built when doors were needed for protection, stands flung open to the summer air; pass through it, over the red flagstones, through the dilapidated grandeur of the great hall, up the broad staircase, and there, in the oak-panelled

room, with the falling-away windows, pause, look round, and think.

A whole rush of influence comes over you—that intense longing to know some of the scenes gone through in that very room, acted by those whose portraits hang above you, that carved ceiling and those rotting panels looking calmly on the while.

The oaks, too, about the old Hall have grown up, seeing generations live their day and pass away; and then they, too, in their turn, were felled. Two long rows of noble oaks, with very few exceptions, came crashing on to the fresh green grass. When was that? They tell us in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when the house was built, where a still older one had stood before it; and the oaks were cut down to pay the young heir's debts.

And this is all we know of that young heir; yet take this deed, and read the rest from our own lives, and we know all about the young heir. There are four venerable cedar-trees yet standing, and we are told that they once stood a goodly row of six, but two were cut down. When was that?

At the Restoration, when a young bride was brought home to the old Hall, two cedar-trees were cut down to clear the way to the wide view of the surrounding country. This is all we know of the young bride; for she and her children's children have passed away.

We wandered about the house silently, sadly, thoughtfully—my love and I; she, at last, paused before a large casement window, saying, "Oh, let us wait here and think of all the things that have happened in this strange little room with the great window! See, it looks down the avenue. I can fancy, in days long gone by, some bright young girl waiting and watching at this window for her lover to come riding down that avenue; and he came, by-and-by—he came gallantly, and the girl at the window waved her hand with a flush of love and joy as the young knight came riding his charger and dashing through the wind, which caught his short, full cloak and waved the long feather in his velvet cap; and the wind bent the avenue trees into arches above his head, and blew him on his way to his watching ladye-love. And he knew to which window he must look for the welcome he came for. And this little room was dearer to the bright young girl than any in the great hall; for it was from this room that she always saw the first approach of him she loved."

So spoke my love, and doubtless she was right; but, alas! connected with this very room hangs a dark tale—a tale of murder. It was told to us then, as we stood on the very spot where probably the deed had been determined on.

And as the tale was told to us, gradually the influence of the place crept over us, and we lost ourselves in it, and were carried back to the long-dead days of Queen Bess in the good old times.

The Hall, then a splendid modern mansion, was in full glory. In at the massive gateways, the whole façade of the imposing pile of building told of merriment and gay festivity. Banners were flying, the sounds of music came from under the trees, and through the open windows sounded the merry laugh and the clashing of wine-cups. The long board in the great hall was gaily decked, flowers were strewn over the red-tiled floor, and evergreens were decorating the walls. At the festive board the gay company were drinking health and long life to the newly-married pair—the young, handsome Sir Guy Percival, and the beautiful Gwendoline, youngest daughter of Sir Geoffrey Buckle.

Sir Geoffrey, the widower, sat proud and glad at one end of the richly-decked board, with his jester and pages around him; at the other end of the board sat Hugh, the young heir of the Buckles.

Near to him, and opposite to the bridal pair, sat Elizabeth, proud and stately, the elder daughter of Sir Geoffrey Buckle.

Beautiful golden-haired Gwendoline, too heavy for you must have been the weight of those flashing jewels, and too stiff for your rounded form that standing-out ruff, the long pointed waist, and the huge hooped petticoat. The bright hair was dragged from the childish face and rolled over cushions and bedecked with jewels; but even all this could not mar that exquisite beauty.

And he who was now her husband; in all England was none so brave, so handsome, so valiant as this stalwart young knight, who had ridden down from the border-land to claim his bride. There was something about the young knight—whether it was his knightly bearing, his manly courage, the dark beauty of his face, his high health and splendid form, or the true knightly soul which showed in every action of his life; but it gained him the love of all womankind.

There were sounds of revelry from the courtyard, and the whole company rose, and, led by Sir Geoffrey, approached the windows. Sir Guy handed the little bride from her seat to the open window; and there they two stood, the observed of every eye, to receive the acclamations of the men-at-arms in the court-yard.

Every eye beamed and rejoiced, as well it might, at the pretty sight; all eyes, save one pair, darkly beautiful, dangerously flashing, as they rested on the two at the window. Could it be displeasure? No—worse: it was jealousy. Jealousy eating away at the core of that young heart, and flashing with uncontrollable passion from those dark eyes; and Elizabeth, elder sister of the bride,

turned and left the hall, many an admiring eye following her as she went, this beautiful daughter of a knight, the god-daughter of the Queen of all England, who had youth, beauty, riches, and station, and all that her heart could desire, save this one man's love.

Later in the day, ere Sir Guy and his wife departed, after customary speeches and ceremonies, it was Elizabeth's duty to hand the bridegroom a flagon of wine. As she advanced, slender and graceful, bearing the silver flagon of red wine, all alike noted the intense pallor of her cheeks and the ashy hue of her lips; her great dark eyes seemed to be living coals of fire. Even Sir Guy noted it, and, bending over her, he said, "What ails thee, dear sister?"

At this she gave him one look with her wondrous eyes, and said, in a commanding voice, "Take this, and drink to us;" and turning her eyes from him, Elizabeth met those of her maid—the girl Phoebe—fixed on her with a look of frenzied horror, and by this look she knew that the girl had watched her actions, and seen that into the flagon of red wine she had poured drops which would poison her young brother-in-law—determining that he should not live happily with her sister, since he did not love herself.

Elizabeth saw Sir Guy raise the flagon to his lips, but, fascinated, she was unable to turn from Phoebe's gaze; then, with a sway and a lurch, she fell fainting on to the floor.

In the commotion which followed, and while Gwendoline was raising the graceful head from the dust, Phoebe managed to overturn the contents of the flagon, still held untasted in Sir Guy's hand.

"Ah, my lord, forgive me!" cried Phoebe, falling on her knees; "forgive me for my carelessness."

"Rise, Phoebe, and take your mistress to her chambers; I will no more wine this night;" and the bride and bridegroom departed, and the guests separated.

Elizabeth, alone, and half mad in her bower, lay thinking over the events of the evening. She had not seen the overturning of the wine; she imagined her brother-in-law to have drunk it, and to herself she was repeating, "She shall not live happily with him; he is my love. No, I have well punished her presumption in daring to win my love. But, ah, me! and I have killed him—I, who love him better than life!" and burying her face in the coverlet, she stifled her screams.

"Phoebe," was the thought which roused her, "Phoebe knows! Phoebe must have seen me drop the contents of the phial into the flagon. No man, or woman either, shall live and thus have me in their power."

Outside the door of the strange corner room with the great casement window, winds a narrow,

steep staircase, leading to a small room above, and it is up these stairs the lady is said to have gone to murder her maid. Certain it is that the maid disappeared, and was not heard of for years and years. Long afterwards, a body was found in one of the cellars in the subterranean passage, which communicated with the strange corner room by means of a trapdoor.

Sir Guy and Lady Gwendoline went away, happy together, to the border-land, and that is all we know of them. Elizabeth, elder daughter of Sir Geoffrey Buckle, was found one night in the strange corner room, dead by her own hand, strongly suspected by all of having murdered her maid Phoebe.

We only know of her existence now by this deed that she committed. It may be partly true, it may be wholly false; we have only the tradition to believe or disbelieve of all these dark deeds of "the good old times."

Good deeds were done, too, but few of these remain to us. We hear of how, once again, at the old Hall, the oaks were thinned. This was in time of famine, and the oaks bought bread for the half-starving village. This was the deed of the good Sir Roger.

My love and I penetrated the passage to the subterranean pathway. We opened one of the dusty, broken cellar-doors, but at the first step into it the flooring gave way below our feet. Ah! well, what cause is there to penetrate? let the dead rest, and their deeds sleep.

And as we sit in rooms which once were so splendid, and now are but rotting memories of what has been, carvings are slipping from their places, beams are holding feebly together. We would fain know what the wainscots could tell us—whether secrets and mementoes yet remain behind panels and secret drawers, with which the old house abounds.

The present owner of the old Hall neither lives in it nor cares for it: he would rather it fell to pieces. Ah! perhaps he is right, what have we to do with its past? the ways of living then were not our ways of living.

Fall apart, old Hall! not bit by bit and day by day; but in the noonday, when the sun is high and men are about to see your last deed; fall proudly and grandly with one mighty crash, and bury with you beneath your ruins all the secrets and their memories you contain. Old oaks and venerable cedars which yet remain, spread lovingly over your ruin, and new generations spring up and live their day on the spot.

And to the new generations—live your lives to do what your hands find to do with all your might, and let your deeds be "good," that you may live long in the land; for by your deeds alone will you live.

ST. LEONARD'S CRAG.

BY MARY WOOD.

HURRAH—hurrah! a holiday!" exclaimed Nat Sturdy, a bright-looking lad of about fourteen, bursting into the school-room of Dr. Sharpe's academy at Wearmouth; "we've got a holiday, and we're going to spend it at Bayside. It's Colman's birthday, and his father has sent two hampers full of good things to give us a treat."

"Hurrah—hurrah!" responded a number of voices; "hurrah for Colman senior!"

"But who told you?"

"Why, Colman himself; and here he is."

The entrance of the hero of the day was greeted by another shout, followed by a still louder one when the doctor himself entered and announced that, at Mr. Colman's request, he had granted a holiday, it being the birthday of their schoolfellow Edward Colman.

A scramble to put away books and slates ensued, and bats, balls, and wickets were speedily collected, causing a scene of confusion for some minutes, during which we will pause to mention that Edward Colman was the only son of a gentleman of large landed property, who lived at a place called Querce Park, a few miles distant from Wearmouth. As he had been brought up at home amidst a train of domestics who did not fail to impress upon him that he was heir to vast property, he had imbibed an idea that he was a person of great consequence, and being a boy of some talent, had been flattered by a mercenary tutor, and spoiled by a doting mamma, till he had become so arrogant that he fancied his own judgment superior, not only to that of his companions, but even to that of his parents and elders. To endeavour to counteract this self-sufficiency, his father, who was a wise and sensible man, had placed him at Dr. Sharpe's academy, where his favourite companion was Nat Sturdy, the son of Lieutenant Sturdy, who had a short time since been appointed to the command of the Coastguard station at Bayside.

Having been two voyages to India with his father, Nat's education had been somewhat neglected, to remedy which he was now attending Dr. Sharpe's establishment as a day pupil, previous to his joining the Worcester training-ship. Nat was a perfect contrast to Edward Colman. Accustomed to the strict discipline of a ship, he was modest and obedient, though many a wild frolic betrayed the joyous spirit of the young sailor.

"What are you about, Sturdy? You are surely not going to take that leather strap with you?" asked Edward.

"Yes, I am; we shall return past our home, and I want to take care of it."

"Nonsense; it will be safe enough if you leave it here."

"But it is such a strong, capital strap; and what is more, father said, when he gave it me, that I was to bring it home every night," replied Nat, as he resolutely rolled up his strap and put it into his jacket-pocket.

"Your father is not captain on shore, and you need not mind him about such a trifle as that."

"My father is my captain and parent too; he knows better than I do, and I mean to mind him here and everywhere."

Finding he could not argue Nat out of his seafaring notions, as he called them, Edward Colman walked on in silence. It was not the first time that he had been conquered, if not convinced of error of judgment, since he had been at school, but he was to receive a lesson that day which he would not be likely to forget.

The day was beautiful; the autumn tints were in full glow; the golden leaves of the beeches and the scarlet hue of the sycamores contrasted with the deep green of the Scotch firs, and the russet of the fading oaks and elms. The hips and haws were fully ripe, and in this secluded spot the blackberry-bushes were laden with their luscious berries, tempting the boys to a feast. However, they soon assembled on a large tract of greensward, smooth enough to serve for a cricket-field. After playing for a couple of hours, the doctor's servant, who had accompanied them, spread the contents of Mr. Colman's hampers on a grassy knoll which served for a dinner-table, and a substantial joint of beef, having, by Dr. Sharpe's orders, been added to the provisions sent by Mr. Colman, the boys dined heartily, and many a merry joke was passed, though Edward Colman, who was of a grave turn, did not always enjoy it.

The repast over, the boys dispersed, and in groups of two or three together sought whatever amusement best pleased them. Edward Colman and Nat Sturdy rambled towards the cliffs, and after chasing an Emperor of Morocco till they had lost sight both of the butterfly and of the rest of the boys, Edward said, "Let us go to the top of St. Leonard's Crag, and see the sun set behind the Castle Hill."

Nat assenting, they were not long in climbing the rugged ascent, and having reached the summit of the lofty cliff, they stood gazing on the vast expanse of ocean which spread beyond the circling bay.

"Look, Nat," said Edward, "there is a fine steamer yonder—going to Australia, perhaps. How should you like to command such a one?"

"Glorious!" replied Nat, a fine glow overspreading his sunburnt features. "But do not go so near the edge of the cliff, Ned."

"Why not?"

"Because my father told me never to do so. The edge overhangs, and fragments break off occasionally; you can see them on the sand below."

"Stuff and nonsense! there is no danger. It is sound enough here. I want to see where that curlew is flying to."

"Back—back! I say," shouted Nat; but he was too late: a wild cry and a thundering sound, and the piece of rock upon which Edward had just placed his foot had given way, and he was precipitated into the abyss below.

Nat stood a moment in utter horror. Then his first thought was to descend to the sands, but an impulse seized him to look down, and ascertain the fate of his friend; so, creeping to a part a little farther to the left of where they had been standing, he lay down and looked over the edge of the cliff. He fully expected to see the mangled form of Edward on the sands below; but, to his surprise, he saw only the great fragment of rock shattered into several pieces by the fall. He fancied he heard a faint cry, and looking down, discerned a white face among the foliage of a stunted tree, which grew out of a fissure in the rock. Was it possible? Yes: Edward's fall had been arrested by the boughs of the tree.

Nat's first impulse was to run at full speed to the Coastguard station for help; but that was at some distance, and before help arrived, the unfortunate boy might be lost by the breaking away of the branches which sustained him.

A sudden idea struck him. He cast a keen glance around, and discerned a narrow zigzag path on the face of the cliff. Perilous, indeed, was the descent; but the active sailor-boy, by clinging to the plants which grew on the face of the rock, accomplished it, and placed himself firmly astride of a strong branch of the tree, to which Edward was suspended by a sharp twig having penetrated the shoulder of his jacket, and his arms clinging convulsively to the branches.

"Courage! it will be all right," said Nat, and taking his strong leather strap from his pocket, he passed it round Edward's waist and the trunk of the tree, which grew out almost horizontally from the rock.

Well was it that he did so, for the cloth of Edward's jacket was slowly giving way, but the strap being tough as well as long, and fastened by a large iron buckle, was sufficient to sustain his weight while Nat re-ascended the narrow path, and ran full speed to the Coastguard station to obtain help.

It arrived, after a time, which to Edward in his perilous position must have seemed endless, though it was not more than ten minutes at farthest. Nat's father and three sailors came, accompanied by a crowd of people who had heard of the accident.

One of the sailors, with a rope fastened round his waist, descended, as Nat had done, to the tree, and

firmly attaching a still longer rope to Edward's waist and shoulders, so as to form a sort of cradle, detached the leather strap, and Edward was hoisted safely to firm ground.

At the sight of his white face—for he was insensible—a thrill ran through the spectators; but when he was laid safely on the grass at some distance from the dreadful chasm, a loud cheer rent the air, and all turned to Nat, who had stood, pale almost as Edward himself, watching his ascent in breathless anxiety. When the young sailor who had fastened the rope had also re-ascended, Nat threw himself on the grass by the side of his still insensible friend, and chafed his cold hands with both his, then turning to his father, said, "Oh, father! is it all in vain; will he die of it?"

"No, my boy; we must carry him to the station, and put him to bed: with God's help, I trust, we shall be able to revive him."

As they were preparing to do this, a man was seen riding furiously. It proved to be Edward's father, who had heard that his son had fallen over the cliff, but not that he was saved. No words can describe his emotion on finding that Edward had been rescued from such an awful death.

In a short time, a doctor having arrived at the station, Edward recovered his senses, and his father, after liberally rewarding the sailors, had him conveyed home. But how could he reward the father and the son, who had not only saved him from such imminent peril, but taught him a lesson that changed the character of his life? for he became as remarkable for his modesty and Christian humility, as he had formerly been for his self-sufficiency and arrogance.

"THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

290. Mention a tree that was named from the circumstance connected with it.

291. Name two Hebrew leaders whose strength did not abate with age.

292. In what book and verse have we the combination of persons particularised who condemned our Lord?

293. What book of the Bible bears a name almost similar in meaning to that of Moses?

294. When was silver reckoned of little value?

295. Who, though not a king, is said to have acted in a kingly manner?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 639.

282. *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke ii. 29).

283. By revealing himself (Gen. xxxii. 29; Exod. iii. 6, 14; Job xlii. 5; Dan. x. 10—21; Luke v. 8; Acts ix. 4; Rev. i. 17).

284. The Amalekite, in hope of winning David's favour, declared falsely that he had slain Saul. Probably he had followed the camp to plunder the slain 2. Sam. i. 1—15).